out of the 65 million girls not attending school worldwide, 35 million are from India; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to accelerate the efforts and increase expenditure on girls education?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALIASHRAF FATMI): (a) As per Selected Educational Statistics 2001-2002, out of the total 93.8 million girl child population projected in the age group of 6-14 years, 69.0 million girls are enrolled in schools.

(b) Under SSA, efforts have been made for increasing enrolment of girls by providing them free taxt books; separate toilets, organizing back to school camps for out of school girls; community mobilization to target girls' enrolment and retention; gender sensitization of text books and teachers; and for context specific innovative activities for girls' education including early childhood care and education. Under the National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), additional support to Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) is being provided for enhancing learning of the under-privileged/disadvantaged girls at elementary level. Besides, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme has been approved for opening of residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level for girls belonging predominantly to SC, ST, OBC and minorities, in difficult areas.

National Telent Search Examination

†209. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that system of National Talent Search Examination has been changed;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that examination conducted for science talent search at 12th class level has been discontinued,

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether it is also a fact that scholarship amount of Rs. 500 has been reduced to Rs. 200; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Science Talent Search at class XII level was discontinued in 1977. The examination was extended to Social Science subject also taught at Class X and renamed as National Talent Search Scheme.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Introduction of Palmistry

210. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been any decision to introduce Palmistry as a subject for studies in schools and colleges in the year 2004-05;

(b) whether there were other such subjects void of scientific logic as were proposed for inclusion in the courses of studies in schools and colleges in the year 2003-2004;

(c) whether the State Government have taken any steps in this regard; and

(d) the present status of such moves?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Admissions under handicapped quota

†211. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the mentally retarded students are not getting admissions in the universities under the reservation for handicapped quota;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether mentally retarded children do require higher education; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.